

# The Research Dynamics and Trends of Aesthetics, Based on Scientific Knowledge Mapping: An Analysis of the Papers Published in the British Journal of Aesthetics (2001-2022) and the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism (2011-2022)

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## Abstract

This paper is based on the papers published in recent 10 years (2001-2022) from The British Journal of Aesthetics and The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, both of which enjoy high reputation in the aesthetic field. This paper uses scientific knowledge mapping and draws the knowledge mapping by using CiteSpace. Guided by visualization of conclusions, it outlines some development trends of aesthetics discipline and presents the research hot spots and changes of international aesthetics from a new perspective. Then this paper discusses the characteristics of aesthetics itself.

**Keywords:** aesthetics, the British Journal of Aesthetics, the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, scientific knowledge mapping, CiteSpace

The British Journal of Aesthetics and The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, two internationally renowned aesthetics journals, were used to extract information from articles published in the last decade (2001-2022), using scientific knowledge mapping analysis, with the goal of making general judgments about the recent development of the aesthetics discipline. Just as Mr. Zhu Guangqian stated in the introduction of "Literary Psychology", "putting aside stereotypes and inscribing from facts some principles that can be applied to literary criticism", this paper is dedicated to outlining some of the trends of the discipline of aesthetics through newer research methods.

In this paper, by selecting the core collection database in Web of Science as the data source, we searched "The British Journal of Aesthetics" and "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism" according to the publication name in the advanced search, with the category of "Article" and the time set as 2001-2022. The British Journal of Aesthetics" and "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism" were searched in the advanced search by publication name, the category of literature was "Article", and the time period was set to 2001-2022, and a total of 574 search records were obtained. The data were exported in the format required by CiteSpace and used as the data source for the study.

## 1. Author Co-citation

Co-citation refers to the phenomenon that two authors are cited jointly by other literatures. The author co-citation network diagram (as shown in Figure 1) can be obtained by using Citespace software to calculate the author co-citation relationship, and the academic community of a certain research field can be revealed in the author co-citation diagram. As can be seen from Figure 1, 54 co-cited authors have appeared in the research of British Journal of Aesthetics and Aesthetics and Art Criticism in the past 20 years, and the degree of overlap between authors is high, and the co-cited network is wide.

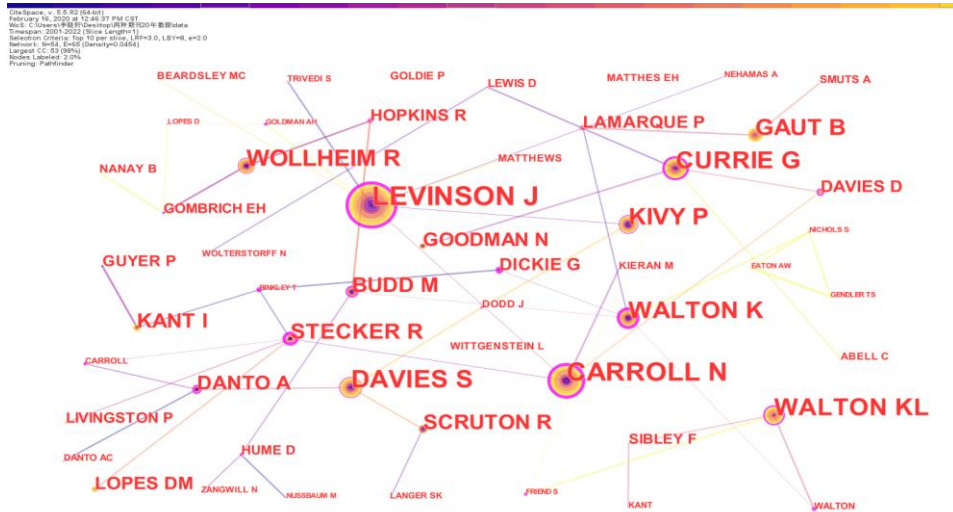


Figure 1. Author co-cited knowledge graph

It can be seen from the co-cited authors that in the recent two decades of researches in various fields of aesthetics, three scholars, Levinson J, Carroll N and Davies S, constitute the central nodes of the network with high centrality and form a co-cited network. Among them, Levinson J's article "Hume's Standard of Taste: The Real Problem (Perception of Beauty)" was cited The most for 57 times. Carroll N's The Wheel of Virtue: Art, Literature, and Moral Knowledge was cited for 109 times. Davies S most cited article is "Authors' Intentions, Literary Interpretation, and Literary Value", which has been cited for 44 times. In addition, Currie G, Walton KL, Walton K, Kivy P, Wollheim R, Gaut B, etc. ranked the top in the list of authors with more than 100 citations. It is worth noting that the authors with a large number of citations were first cited in the early 21st century, indicating that the research time of each author is earlier and the research content is relatively mature.

Table 1. Author co-citation number distribution

Number	Author	Citations	Centrality	Year
1	LEVINSON J	259	0.75	2001
2	CARROLL N	213	0.74	2001
3	DAVIES S	158	0.18	2001
4	CURRIE G	137	0.43	2002
5	WALTON KL	134	0.29	2002
6	WALTON K	124	0.74	2001
7	KIVY P	121	0.15	2001
8	WOLLHEIM R	114	0.14	2001
9	GAUT B	104	0.07	2004
10	STECKER R	78	0.72	2001

## 2. Country Correlation

By analyzing the countries of literature source, we can understand the research enthusiasm and cooperation relationship of countries in this field. The cooperative knowledge map of each country is shown in Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4. The larger the nodes in the map, the more papers are published. The cooperation between countries is shown by the thickness of the line, and the thicker line indicates closer cooperation.

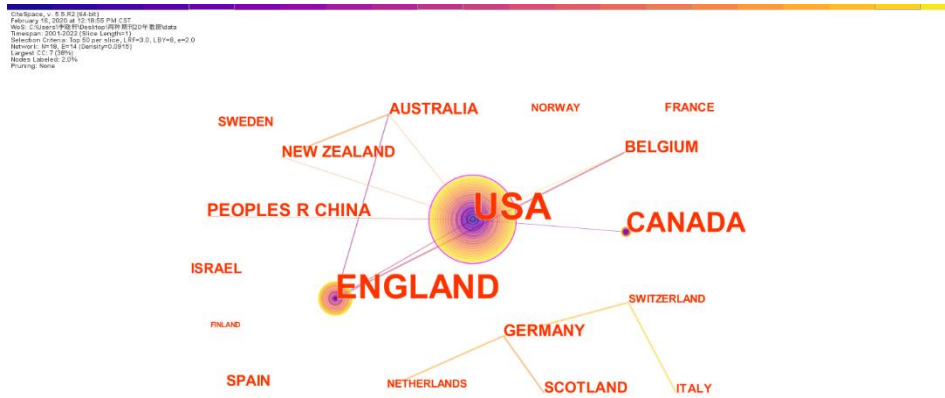


Figure 2. Knowledge map of national cooperation

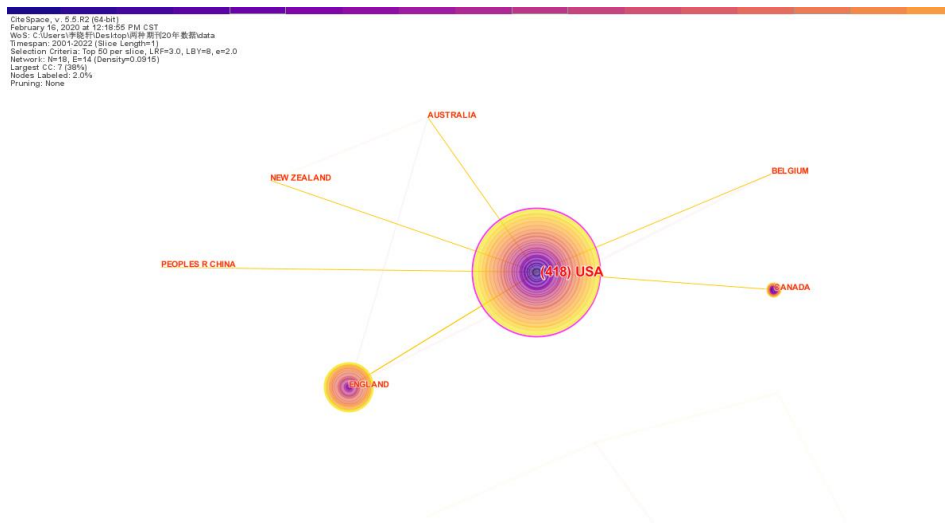


Figure 3. Cooperative knowledge map of the United States

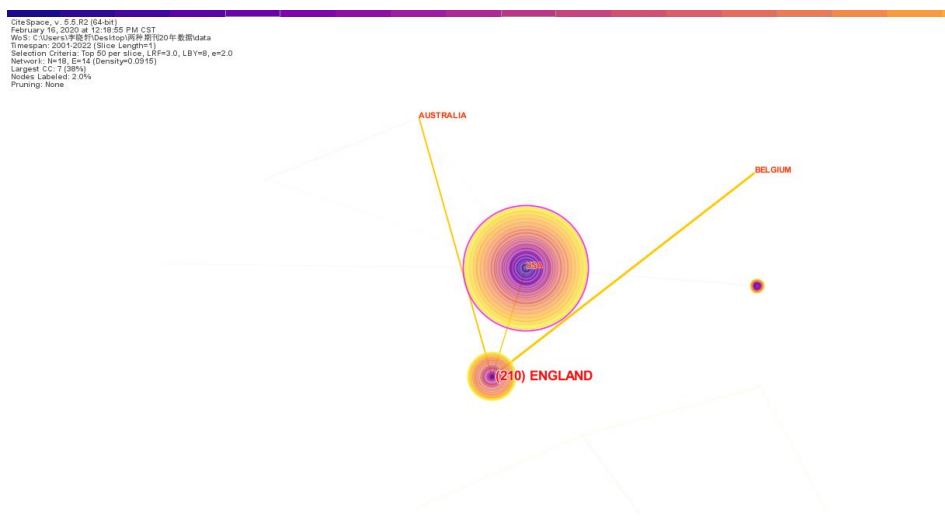


Figure 4. Collaborative knowledge map in the UK

It can be seen from Figure 4 that the research literatures of The British Journal of Aesthetics and Aesthetics and Art Criticism in the past 20 years mainly come from the United States, Britain, Canada, Japan and other countries, and the number of articles published is 14 or more. Among them, the United States has the largest number of nodes and is far ahead of other countries in terms of the number of published papers. The number of published papers is about half of the total number of published papers, specifically 418. The United States is in the cooperation center and together with the United Kingdom constitutes the core node of the network. Looking at Figure 3, countries that work closely with scholars from US institutions include the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, China, Canada, and Belgium. In Figure 4, the United States, Belgium, Australia and other countries cooperate closely with various research institutions in the UK. In addition, in the correlation degree of other countries, research institutions from Germany mainly cooperated with research institutions from Switzerland, the Netherlands, England and other countries. In the knowledge map of national cooperation, 18 countries and 14 links appear, indicating that the cooperation between research institutions in each country is relatively loose.

### 3. Research Hotspots

It is well known that keywords are the core summary of a paper, and the analysis of keywords in the paper can understand the theme of the target article. The keywords given in a paper must have some correlation, which can be expressed by the frequency of co-occurrence. It is generally believed that the more lexical pairs appear in the same literature, the closer the relationship between the two themes will be. Co-word analysis is used to determine the relationship between the subjects represented in the collection by the common occurrence of lexical pairs or noun phrases. In citespace knowledge visualization software, Top value is set to 50, and keyword co-occurrence network method is the main method to generate two knowledge maps of journal research hotspots and keyword emergence knowledge maps, as shown in the figure below.

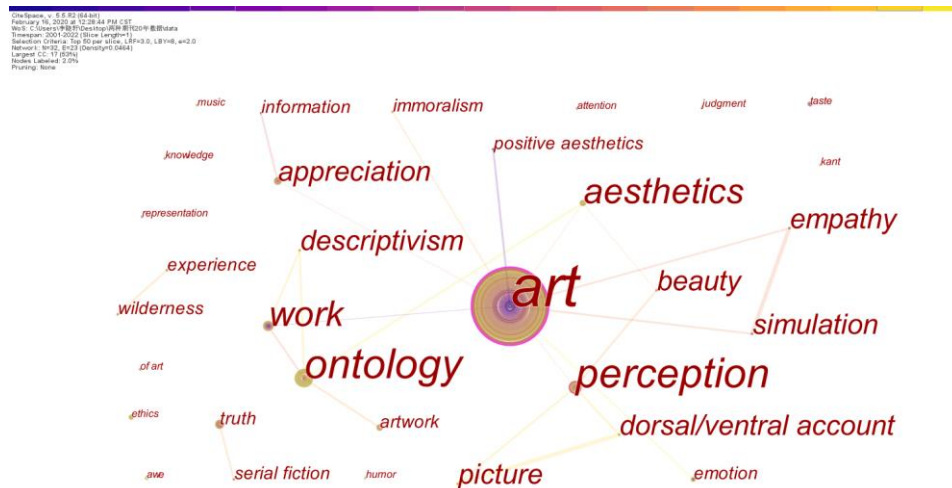


Figure 5. Keywords Hotspot knowledge graph

As can be seen from Figure 5, in the two journals, there are 32 keywords with loose cooperation, 23 links and a network density of 0.0464. The research content mainly includes the following categories: (1) the main keyword art has the largest node with a high centrality of 0.41, which appeared 58 times in total and first appeared in 2003. It shows that the main research direction of the scholars is in the field of art, which is consistent with the research content of the British Journal of Aesthetics and aesthetics and Art Criticism. Other art-related keywords include artwork, of art and other keywords. Perception, emotion, taste, appreciation, etc. As a bridge between man and nature, feeling comes first and then ideas. In essence, art is also a kind of feeling. (3) The research content related to aesthetics includes aesthetics, positive aesthetics, beauty, descriptivism, etc. The main research object of aesthetics is aesthetic activity, which is a spiritual and cultural activity of human beings, and its core is the life experience with aesthetic image as the object. In this kind of experience, the human spirit surpasses the limitation of "self", gets a kind of freedom and liberation, and returns to the spiritual homeland of human, thus confirming its own existence.

### Top 6 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

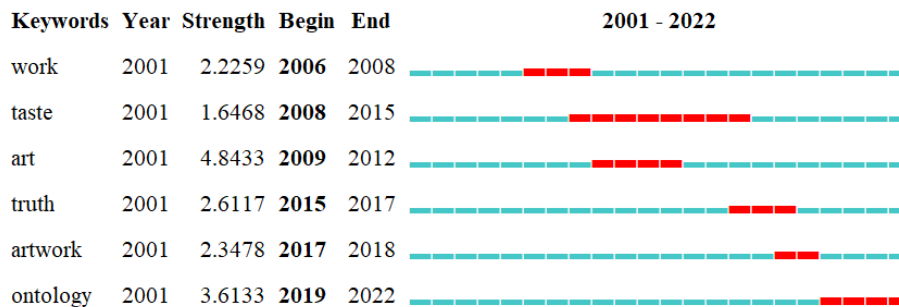


Figure 6. Knowledge map of keyword emergence

Through the analysis of keyword citation and frequency surge nodes, we can have a clearer understanding of the research hotspots and future research trends of British Journal of Aesthetics and Aesthetics and Art Criticism. Figure 6 shows that there are 6 emergent words in total, among which the longest emergent word is "taste", lasting from 2008 to 2015. The emergence word "work" is the first keyword that appeared in 2006, and it has been a research hotspot for nearly three consecutive years. Ontology, an emergent word, emerged in 2019 and continues to be a hot topic in recent studies.

#### 4. Keywords Clustering

Citespace software can perform cluster analysis on the basis of keyword co-occurrence network, categorize numerous keywords into different modules, or cluster keywords with the same meaning into the same module, and label each module to display its keywords (see Figure 7). We can clearly see that the keyword co-occurrence network is clustered into regular regions, each corresponding to a label. The label order is 0 to 3. The smaller the number, the more keywords are contained in the cluster, and each cluster is composed of multiple closely related words. The size of the module value Q is related to the density of nodes, and the larger the Q value is, the better the clustering effect is, which can be used for scientific clustering analysis. The size of the average contour value S can be used to measure the homogeneity of the cluster. The larger S value is, the higher the homogeneity of the network is, and the clustering has high reliability. As can be seen from Figure 7, the module value Q=0.6059, indicating that the clustering effect of the network structure is good. S=0.3442, homogeneity is acceptable.

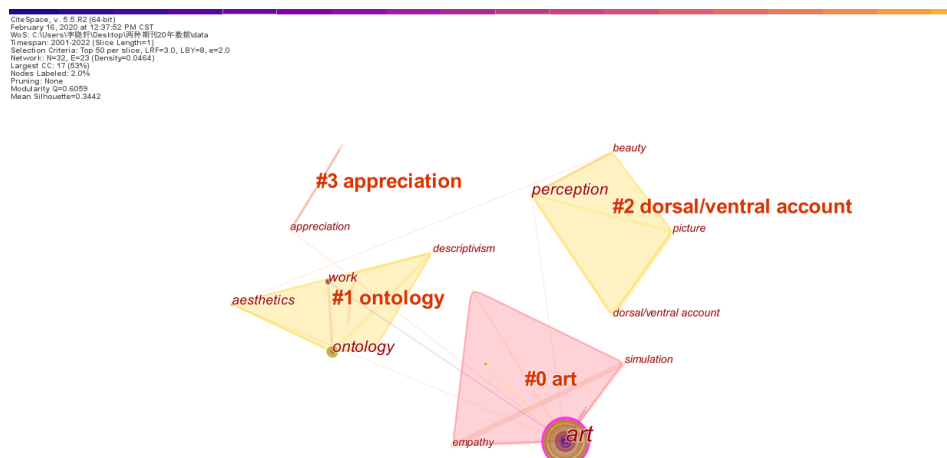


Figure 7. Knowledge graph of keyword clustering

Four modules, including #0 "art", #1 "ontology", #2 "dorsal/ventral account" and #3 "appreciation", emerged through cluster analysis of the document's keywords. Cluster #0 "art" appeared in 2010, including 6 keywords such

as art, emotion, positive aesthetics, etc. Cluster #1 "Ontology" appeared in 2015, including 5 keywords: Ontology, work, artwork, etc. #2 "dorsal/ventral account" appeared in 2018 and consists of four keywords, perception, picture, dorsal/ventral account and beauty. Cluster #3 "appreciation" appeared in 2013, consisting of appreciation and information.

**5. Keywords Time Chart**

In order to better analyze the evolution of keywords in the research of British Journal of Aesthetics and Aesthetics and Art Criticism over time, and to track the annual progress of the research topic, Based on the knowledge map of keywords hotspots, click time-line View with CiteSpace software to generate the knowledge map of annual evolution of keywords in British Journal of Aesthetics and Aesthetics and Art Criticism, as shown in Figure 8, so as to understand the evolution process of topic hotspots more intuitively. In the figure, the node represents the keyword, and the time when the node appears is actually the year when the keyword first appears in the analysis process. Keywords in the figure will only be fixed in the year when they first appear, and then only the frequency of their occurrence will be counted. The frequency statistics will increase to the location of the node where they first appear, so we can see the difference in the size of node circles.

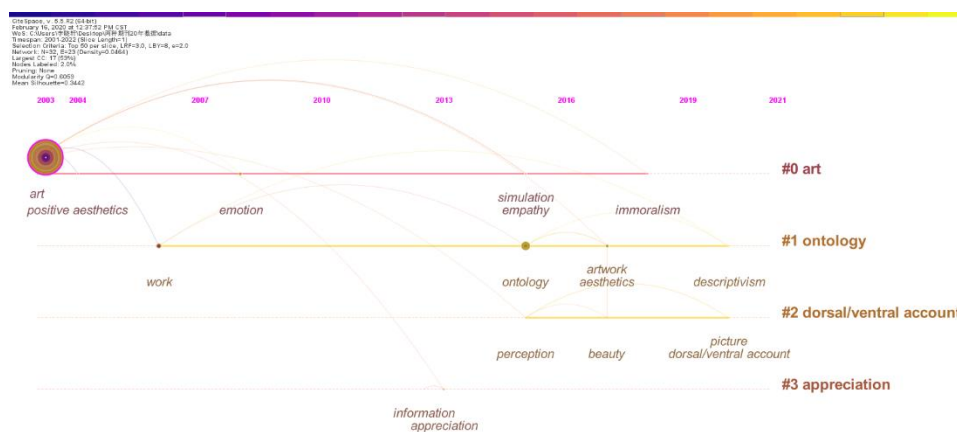


Figure 8. Key words time line knowledge graph

It can be seen from Figure 8 that the number of keywords is small, which is mainly caused by two aspects: one is that the number of keywords in the keyword co-occurrence network is small; the other is that only 4 clusters appear, while other clusters with a small number of keywords are hidden. The time-line distributed theme cluster can see the research duration of different themes in the recent 20 years. In the recent 20 years' research in The British Journal of Aesthetics and Aesthetics and Art Criticism, The top four themes were "art", "Ontology", "dorsal/ventral Account" and "appreciation". Before 2010, keywords included art, positive aesthetics, work, and emotion. After 2010, the number of keywords showed an obvious increase compared with that before 2010, and the research content was gradually enriched, including simulation, picture, beauty, information, etc.

**6. Conclusion and Possible Trends**

After mapping the scientific knowledge of the 574 articles published in the British Journal of Aesthetics and Aesthetics and Art Criticism in the last two decades and synthesizing them, the following conclusions can be drawn: (1) Closure has become a characteristic of the discipline. Aesthetics has shown a high degree of stability in the last decade. The results of the cluster analysis show that aesthetics is less influenced by external emerging knowledge and disciplinary development. (2) Author emergence phenomenon. In the analysis of cited authors, the situation of author emergence was found, i.e., an author published an article and gained a lot of attention in a short period of time. (3) Key words are stable. After calculating the keywords of the articles in the last ten years, from a temporal perspective, the topics included in each type of keywords are more evenly distributed on the research timeline, indicating that most of those that have become research topics in the field of aesthetics have been able to maintain a continuous research output. (4) Attention to current issues. According to the analysis of the research heat, it can be found that the discipline of aesthetics is concerned with current events and phenomena, whether it is about new art forms, new social phenomena, or the development of knowledge in related disciplines. This phenomenon also indicates that aesthetics today is to a certain extent different from the traditional aesthetic study

of fine arts. This phenomenon also indicates that aesthetics nowadays is to some extent different from the traditional aesthetic study of fine arts, but has expanded the scope of aesthetics discussion and concern, and this change has not only injected new vitality into aesthetics, but also provided a possibility to apply aesthetics to a broader contemporary context.

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